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AUTHOR Smith, June Hubbell
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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine if the speech communication programs in Texas colleges and universities were providing the skills needed by industry. A survey of current business journals revealed seven skills needed by college graduates seeking employment in business: (1) public speaking skills, (2) knowledge of communication theory and flow of messages through organizations, (3) interviewing skills, (4) small group meeting skills, (5) dyadic communication skills, (6) listening skills, and (7) leadership skills. Forty-one 1982 undergraduate and 16 graduate college catalogs were examined to discover the number and percentages of Texas degree programs offering business communication-related courses and to compare the description of the skills focused upon in the business-related communication courses to the seven skills listed as needed by the journal review. Except for courses in persuasion/sales presentations and small group discussion and for skills in business-related oral reports and group meeting, all results showed that Texas college speech programs were not meeting the stated communication training needs of business and industry. It would appear that these programs need curriculum additions. (JL)

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An Examination of the Status of Organizational Communication Programs in Texas Colleges and Universities

June Hubbell Smith

West Texas State University

Texas Speech Communication Association

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An Examination of the Status of Organizational Communication Programs in Texas Colleges and Universities

A need for training in job-related (or -relevant) oral communication skills was recognized by industry leaders in the mid-1950's with the publication of such books as: Are You Listening? (Nichols & Stevens, 1957) and Is Anybody Listening? (Whyte & the editors of Fortune, 1950). Since that time, many other business textbooks and popular books have reported a need for communication training and an understanding of communication in the organization as a part of college curriculum for all college graduates seeking employment in business.[1]

College speech communication programs have also recognized industry's need to communicate well and are changing to better meet the oral communication training needs of students going into business-related fields. The purpose of the present paper is to review what courses related to organizational communication are presently offered in Texas undergraduate and graduate speech programs,

and how well the descriptions of these courses match communication skill needs currently listed by business journals.

Methodology

First, a review of current business journals was conducted to compile a list of the oral communication skills needed by or desired of college graduates seeking employment in business careers. The skills listed most often were: (a) giving business oral reports or public speaking skills (Bellows, 1972; Bottinger, 1975; Harris, 1982; Hildebrandt, Bond, Miller & Swinyard, 1982; Horton, 1982; Huegli & Tschirgi, 1974; Latimer, 1982; Litterst & Eyo, 1982; Taylor, 1981), (b) an understanding of communication theory in the organization and the flow of messages through the organization (Bellows, 1972; Golen, 1980; Harris, 1982; Hildebrandt et al. 1982; Litterst & Eyo, 1982; Volard & Davies, 1982), (c) conducting and participating in interviews (Bellows, 1972; Bottinger, 1975; Huegli & Tschirgi, 1974; Josefowitz, 1982; Raudsepp, 1981; Volard & Davies, 1982), (d) small group meeting skills (Bellows, 1972; Bottinger, 1975; Harris, 1982; Volard & Davies, 1982), (e) dyadic

communication, aside from formal interviews (Bottinger, 1975; Huegli & Tschirgi, 1974; Josefowitz, 1982; Taylor, 1981; Volard & Davies, 1982), (f) listening ability (Bellows, 1972; Golen, 1980; Huegli & Tschirgi, 1974; Latimer, 1982; Volard & Davies, 1982), (g) leadership abilities (Horton, 1982).

Second, current (1982) Texas four-year college and university catalogs showing undergraduate degrees with a major in speech communication were examined for courses designed to teach the skills listed by the business journals. Also, Texas graduate school catalogs with a graduate degree major or minor in speech communication were examined for the same courses and skills.[2] Specifically, the catalogs were examined (1) to discover the number and percentage of Texas degree programs offering business communication-related courses, and (2) to compare the description of the skills focused upon in the business-related communication courses to the specific skills listed as needed by the business journal review.

Only catalogs which are current up to or through 1982 were used in the study. A total of 41 four-year Texas college and university undergraduate speech programs were

examined. Also, 16 Texas graduate degree programs offering a major or minor in speech communication were included in the study (see Appendix A for a listing of all graduate and undergraduate schools included in the review). A search was conducted for the following course titles (or their equivalents) in the catalogs: (a) Business and Professional Communication, (b) Persuasion/Sales Presentations, (c) Organizational Theory, (d) Interviewing, (e) Small Group Discussion/Communication, (f) Consulting/Training in Organizations, (g) Listening, (h) Leadership, (i) Organizational/Professional Internship. The Business and Professional course and Organizational Internship were deleted at the graduate level course examination.

The descriptions of the above courses were examined to match the material taught in the course to the skills listed by the review of the business journals. Specifically, those skills checked against the course descriptions were: (a) public speaking in the business context, (b) organizational communication theory and flow patterns, (c) interviewing, (d) small group meeting skills, (e) dyadic communication in the organizational setting, (f) listening training, and

(g) leadership training. The results of this review are shown in Table 1 through Table 4.

Table 1

Percentages of Texas Undergraduate Speech Programs Offering Business Communication-Related Courses

Course Title	# offering course [a]	% offering course
Business & Professional Communication	20	49%
Persuasion/Sales Presentations	32	78%
Organizational Theory	13	32%
Interviewing	7	17%
Small Group Discussion	31	76%
Organizational Internship	4	10%
Consulting/Training	2	5%
Leadership	2	5%
Listening	3	7%

[a]Texas College undergraduate program N = 41.

Table 2

Percentages of Undergraduate Speech Programs

Offering Business-Oriented Skills

Skill	# offering skills[a]	% offering skills
Business-Related Oral Reports	32	78%
Org. Theory/Flow	12	29%
Interviewing	15	36%
Group Meeting	35	85%
Dyadic Interaction	4	10%
Listening	3	7%
Leadership	12	29%

[a] Texas College undergraduate program N = 41.

Discussion

Table 1 indicates that Texas four-year college undergraduate speech programs are providing the following needed courses: (a) Persuasion/Sales (78%, and (b) Small Groups

Table 3

Percentages of Texas Graduate Speech Programs Offering Business Communication-Related Courses[a]

Course Title	# institutions offering course[b]	% institutions offering course
Organizational Theory	5	31%
Interviewing	0	0
Group Discussion	5	31%
Leadership	0	0
Listening	0	0
Persuasion/Sales	2	13%

[a] Only those courses which were graduate student level were reviewed. All bi-level, or courses which may be taken for either graduate or undergraduate credit were excluded from this analysis.

[b] Graduate schools reviewed for this analysis $N = 16$.

Table 4

Percentages of Texas Graduate Speech Programs

Offering Business Communication-Related Skills

Skill	# institutions offering training[a]	% institutions offering training
Business-Related Oral Reports	1	6%
Org. Theory/Flow	3	18%
Interviewing	0	0
Small Groups	3	18%
Dyadic Interaction	0	0
Leadership	1	6%
Listening	0	0

[a] Graduate schools reviewed for this analysis N = 16.

(76%). Table 2 indicates that skill needs are generally met for these courses with public speaking skills being emphasized in 78% of the programs and group meeting and analysis skills being emphasized in 85% of the programs. However, the other skill needs listed by the business journals do not appear to

be met very well in the undergraduate programs (see Table 2). Also, course offerings on the undergraduate level are not generally intended to address the special communication needs of business and industry (see Table 1 and Table 2). Finally, graduate programs show an even greater deficiency in the courses taught (see Table 3) and the skills related to industry communication needs being taught (see Table 4).

Conclusions

Due to the reported interest in business for training in communication skills in the organization, it would appear that Texas college programs (undergraduate and graduate) need curriculum additions in this area. Most lacking in the undergraduate programs are courses in interviewing, organizational communication, and listening. Graduate programs show that only 31% of Texas graduate schools have graduate-only classes in organizational communication and small groups. Therefore, graduate students are limited in the training beyond the bachelor's degree in business-related communication theory and skill levels.

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Footnotes

[1]Useful sources for early literature on the communication needs of business include the following: R.M. Carter, Communication in Organizations, Detroit, Michigan: Gale Research Co., 1972; J.L. Franklin, Organization Development, An Annotated Bibliography, Ann Arbor, Michigan: CRUSK, 1973; or Theodore T. Herbert & E.B. Yost, Management Education and Development: An Annotated Resource Book, Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1978.

[2]Two-year colleges were not included in this analysis because of prior work in this area by Ann Harrell and the Ad Hoc Committee on Needs of Business & Industry. Her committee researched particularly the community college response to industrial communication needs. A report of this study can be obtained from: Ann Harrell, Speech Dept., McLennan Community College, Waco, TX 76708.

Appendix A
Graduate and Undergraduate Texas Colleges Included in the Paper

Undergraduate College Programs

Abilene Christian University, Abilene, TX.

Angelo State University, San Angelo, TX.

Austin College, Sherman, TX.

Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Corpus Christi State University, Corpus Christi, TX.

East Texas Baptist College, Marshall, TX.

East Texas State University, Commerce, TX.

Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, TX.

Howard Payne, Brownwood, TX.

Houston Baptist College, Houston, TX.

Incarnate Word College, San Antonio, TX.

Lamar University, Beaumont, TX.

Lubbock Christian College, Lubbock, TX.

McMurry, Abilene, TX.

Mary Hardin Baylor, Belton, TX.

Midwestern State University, Wichita Falls, TX.

North Texas State University, Denton, TX.

Pan American University, Edinburg, TX.

St. Mary's University of San Antonio, TX.

Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, TX.

Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, TX.

Sul Ross State University, Alpine, TX.

Tarleton, Stephenville, TX.

Texas A&I University, Kingsville

Texas A&M University, College Station, TX.

Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, TX.

Texas Luthern College, Seguin, TX.

Texas Southern University, Houston, TX.

Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX.

Texas Weslyn College, Fort Worth, TX.

Texas Women's University, Denton, TX.

Trinity University, San Antonio, TX.

University of St. Thomas, Houston, TX.

University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, TX.

University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

University of Texas at El Paso, El Paso, TX.

University of Texas at San Antonio, San Antonio, TX.

University of Texas at Tyler, Tyler, TX.

University of Texas, Permian Basin, Odessa, TX.

Wayland Baptist College, Plainview, TX.

West Texas State University, Canyon, TX.

Graduate College Programs

Abilene Christian University, Abilene, TX.

Angelo State University, San Angelo, TX.

Austin College, Sherman, TX.

Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Corpus Christi State University, Corpus Christi, TX.

East Texas State University, Commerce, TX.

Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, TX.

North Texas State University, Denton, TX.

Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, TX.

Sul Ross State University, Alpine, TX.

Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, TX.

Texas Southern University, Houston, TX.

Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX.

University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

University of Texas at Tyler, Tyler, TX.

West Texas State University, Canyon, TX.